DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 034 835 UD 009 443

TITLE	Mobile Reading Centers, Dade County, Florida. Program Conspectus.
INSTITUTION	Center for Urban Education, New York, N.Y. Program Reference Service.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Div. of Information, Technology, and Dissemination.
REPORT NO	PC-003
PUB DATE	Oct 69
NOTE	4p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.30
DESCRIPTORS	*Elementary School Students, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5, Grade 6, Mobile Classrooms, *Reading Clinics, *Reading Diagnosis, *Reading Difficulty, Reading Improvement, Reading Instruction, *Remedial Reading
IDENTIFIERS	Dade County, Florida

ABSTRACT

This bulletin describes Mobile Reading Centers which serve students with reading disabilities in grades 3 through 6 in Dade County, Florida schools. The centers consist of 5 buses which were formerly staffed by 3 remedial reading specialists (1965-1968) but, due to cutback in funds, are presently staffed with one specialist (1968-1969). The mobile units serve 10 schools a year and provide one half-hour of instruction daily to each student. Both informal and standardized data attest to the fact that the students' reading skills have improved. In addition, attendance, attitudes, study habits, and classroom participation have enhanced academic progress. (KG)

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Center for Urban Education

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Program Conspectus

Program: Mobile Reading Centers

Location: Dade County, Florida

Date Started: January 1965

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Scope: Each center serves a maximum of 2 schools during a school year. Directed toward students in grades 3-6, the centers reached 500 children in the period 1965-68. During his stay in the reading center, a child received a half-hour of instruction daily.

Staff: In the first 3 years of the program each reading center was staffed by 3 remedial reading specialists. In 1968-69, due to a cutback in funds, each had only 1 specialist, who also drove the unit.

Special Materials, Equipment, & Facilities: 5 "reserve" buses were converted into mobile reading centers. Each was divided into 3 reading instruction carrels and equipped with such items as film strip projectors; tape recorders; listening stations; chalk boards, and a variety of reading materials.

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Description of Activities:

"Approximately 3-10 percent of the elementary school children in the poverty areas of Dade County are in urgent need of clinical diagnosis and instruction with their reading problems." (R1,p.1) Although there are 6 reading clinics in the county, the school system found that in many cases, "working parents and lack of transportation money prevents students in disadvantaged areas who have a serious reading problem, from attending a reading clinic. The Mobile Reading Centers were created to bring the clinics to these youngsters." (R2,section 13)

Each mobile center serves 2 schools at a time; the bus is parked in front of the school for half a day, 5 days a week, for at least 1 year. The program reaches a maximum of 10 schools in a given year.

"The youngsters who are referred to the remedial program by their teachers and principals are those with the most serious reading problems in grades three through six. Their difficulties range from lack of ability to communicate thoughts and experiences, poor recognition of forms and symbols, limited sight words, inadequate skills in relating sounds to letters, to ineffective attempts at remembering and understanding what was read." (R2,section 13)

In the reading center a child is tested, his difficulties are diagnosed, and a "highly structured individualized program [is designed] to get the youngster to the point where he can function in a group correctional reading program in his regular classroom. Children work in the clinic until their progress gives evidence of being permanent." (R2,section 13)

In the course of a day each reading specialist works with approximately 30 children, in 10 half-hour sessions; no more than 3 children are worked with at one time.

Evaluation:

In 1968 the following evidence of effectiveness was noted by the project:

> In a relatively short period of time this year, working with boys and girls has provided us with some reassuring reasons for being optimistic with regard to what Mobile Clinical reading services can do...Through teacher and principal comments, informal and standardized data, growth is observable in the child's reading skills, as well as in his attitudes towards himself, school and learning. (R1,p.2)

> As the students progress in reading skills, improvements have been noticed in attendance, attitudes, study habits and classroom participation. These changes seem to stem from self-confidence brought on by the experience of success in reading. (R2,section 13)

A formal evaluation of the program is now in preparation. PRS has been informed by the evaluator that the test scores indicate notable improvement in the reading skills of the children.

Budget:

For the school years 1965 through 1968, the program received $306,344 in ESEA Title I funds. This sum covered conversion of the 5 buses, salaries for a staff of 16, and the purchase of instructional materials and equipment.

In the 1968-69 school year, Title I funds for the program were reduced to approximately $68,000 resulting in a substantial cutback in staff.

References:

1. Dade County Public Schools. Mobile Reading Centers Project Description. Dade County, Florida, 1969.

2. Department of Public Information, Dade County Schools. Twenty-One Doorways To Tomorrow. Dade County, Florida, 1968.

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Descriptors:

GRADE 3
GRADE 4
GRADE 5
GRADE 6
INDIVIDUALIZED READING
ITINERANT CLINICS
READING CLINICS
SCHOOL BUSES

FLORIDA / DADE COUNTY

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